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ABSTRACT

Two linguistic propositions provide the subject matter for this discussion. The first is that all nouns can serve as locatives. This is exemplified in the locative structure of Chinese nouns, mostly with the overt markers of locative suffixes, just as English nouns are used as such in the form of prepositional phrases, or as Japanese nouns are used as such in the form of postpositional phrases. Secondly, the author proposes that Chinese locative suffixes, by way of their colligation with nouns, similar to a Russian noun with case inflections, should be accepted as another criterion for identifying Chinese nouns. The author also believes that the capability of nouns to function as locatives is a linguistic universal, as well as a linguistic particular for Chinese. (Author/VM)

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THE INHERENT CAPABILITY OF NOUNS TO FUNCTION AS LOCATIVES
-- A New Criterion for Identifying Chinese Nouns

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I

My attention was first drawn to this topic when I came across an unidiomatic Chinese example given by Charles Hockett in his "A Course in Modern Linguistics." The initial interest led up to my close examination of Chinese locative expressions, and my tentative conclusion thereon.

My first proposition is: All nouns can serve as Locative, which, as a case or meaning category, has been suggested by Becker (1967), Fillmore (1968), and Platt (1971). This proposal will become clear if you examine the following English examples:

He sat in his car (or an armchair).
He stood near a desk (or Fred).
I shall be with you in spirit.
This proposal borders on absurdity.

In these sentences 'car', 'armchair', 'desk', 'Fred', 'spirit', and 'absurdity' all seem to serve as Locatives, though the last two are metaphoric. My argument is: A clause beginning with 'where' can be added to all the examples above.

II

In Chinese, since all prepositions come from verbs, and nine out of ten are still used both as verbs and prepositions, it might be understandable that the prepositions for Locatives (here including Directional) cannot express as many exact locations as situations require. Hence my second proposition is: When used as Locatives, Chinese nouns usually require locative markers or suffixes. Thus, the Chinese equivalents of the above English nouns usually do not serve as Locatives (even with prepositions) except that the first two with a locative suffix like li meaning 'inside', the second two with fujin 'neighborhood or near', or the fifth one with shang meaning 'above, or aspect'. And the last noun 'absurdity' is used so much as a Locative that no Locative suffix is required in Chinese. The example, given by Hockett on p.247 of "A Course in Modern Linguistics," Women yi dao le che, ta jou kai men le 'As soon as we arrived at the car, he opened the door', betrays that he, as a speaker of

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English, has acted as his own informant, or he has struck out, in the example supplied by a Chinese, the Locative suffix after che 'car', for the convenience of comparing the two languages word for word. In either case, he didn't suspect that such an omission would make the whole sentence unintelligible, or even misleading. Several Chinese speakers considered, just as I did, that his example means 'As soon as we reversed the car, he opened the door', where the word 'car' is used as a direct object of 'reverse', instead of his intended meaning that 'car' serves as a Locative. It seems reasonable to accept the suggestion that verbs of motion, such as 'arrive', 'go' and 'hit', demand that the goals be used in the meaning of Locative (cf. Fillmore, 1971: 11).

To illustrate the special quality of the Chinese prepositions, I will use two prepositions or coverbs as they are often called by linguists. They are zai 'at, or stay at', dao 'to, go, or arrive'. First consider these two sentences with zai

Ta zai che-li 'He at car-inside -- He is in the car'.
Ta zai che-li du shu 'He at car-inside read book -- He read a book in the car'.

here zai in the first sentence is used as a verb, and zai in the second as a preposition. The zai in both sentences just indicates a location without giving the exact information of inside, outside, or others, as the English 'in', 'out', etc. would give. Hence, the necessity of Chinese Locative suffixes like li 'inside', wai 'outside', qian 'front', and hou 'back' to be attached to a noun if it is to be used as a Locative. Thus, for Fillmore's example (1968: 47) 'The box has many toys in it,' Chinese say Hezi-li you hendo wanju, where hezi 'box' is added with li 'inside', since 'box' is used as Locative. The usage of dao 'to, go, or arrive' can be seen in the following sentences

Ta dao le 'He arrived already'.
Ta dao che-li qule 'He to car-inside go already -- He went into the car'.

In almost the same way, dao is used as verb and preposition respectively. As far as English is concerned there are other prepositions besides 'in' and 'into' which can be used after a verb, such as 'near', 'beyond', etc. For all these, Chinese has to resort to the addition of locative expressions like

fujin 'neighborhood or near', neibian 'that side or beyond'. In other words, for English locative prepositional phrases, the Chinese equivalents are verb or coverb zai plus noun plus Locative suffix, where Locative suffixes for very few nouns are optional, and for most indispensable. (In Japanese, which is not related to Chinese, I seem to have found a striking parallel to Chinese, for its equivalents of English locative prepositional phrases are noun plus postposition ni, where the postposition often relies on Locative expressions, in the order of '+ N ± no ± Locative + ni', to convey various English locative meanings. For example, Japanese has yama ni, yama (no) naka ni 'in the mountains.')

III

At this point, I would like to examine some criteria for identifying Chinese nouns. Some grammarians point out that there are a few suffixes that can identify Chinese nouns. Here we may quote the following examples (Hu Fu and Wen Lian, 1955: 80)

huoer 'work'
cuoer 'error'
xiaoer 'smile'
pangzi 'fat man'
fengzi 'madman'
daizi 'stupid man'
lazi 'pepper'
kantou 'to be worth seeing'
xiangtou 'to be worth thinking'
kutou 'suffering'
chitou 'to be worth eating'

in which three suffixes (-er, -zi, -tou) have been established as nominal markers. As is known to speakers of Chinese, though these suffixes are useful in identifying nouns, nouns with suffixes are very limited in number. And nouns which can be identified by their nominal prefixes are even more limited. According to Lu (1964: 139), there might be only three prefixes -- they are di, meaning 'in the order of ...', used with figures to form ordinal numbers; lao 'old', to form a noun with the possible meanings of respect or endearment; xiao 'small', also to form a noun, with the possible meanings of smallness or endearment. In my opinion, di can be accepted as a noun prefix; lao and xiao can form nouns, but can also be

used to form numerous adjectives. Examples are

laoqi 'with a mature look'
laoshi 'honest'
xiaoqi 'stingy'
xiaoxin 'careful'

for all of them can be used with hen 'very'. As a result, there seems to be a consensus among linguists (John De Francis, 1946: 46; Chao, 1948: 34, 1968: 505; H.F. Simon, 1953:345) that Chinese nouns are those expressions which can be modified by a so-called D-M Compound. This may be described as a demonstrative word plus a measure word or classifier, something like the English 'this kind (of)', 'that piece (of)' or 'two blocks (of)', which can be used before a noun, except that in Chinese the function word 'of' is not required. Needlessly to say, the D-M compound plus noun is the most frequently used form of a noun in its expansion or actual use. Unfortunately, however, there are nouns which can not be so readily used in the D-M frame, while at the same time many adjectives and verbs can be fitted into the frame. In other words, many expressions which are nouns according to their meaning do not fit the frame, and many expressions of other parts of speech do fit the frame.

Let me illustrate. In Chinese, there is no yi ge tian 'a day' (though there is yi tian), but there are yi ge zheng tian 'a whole day', and yi ge gongzuo tian 'a work-day'. Also, there is no yi ge ye or yi ge wan for 'a night' (though there is yi ye or yi wan), but there is yi ge yewan. Because of this, ye, wan, and yewan all for 'night', would be considered different nominal heads as seen in the works of H. F. Simon (1953). On the other hand, chi 'eat', re 'hot' would fit the above frame like zhe zhong chi 'this kind (of) eat(ing)', zhe zhong re 'this kind (of) hot(ness)', which, though used in a way like nouns, are considered by many as verb and adjective respectively.

IV

In the study of Chinese locative suffixes, I have found, however, that all Chinese nouns can be used with a considerable number of the following locative suffixes, while verbs and adjectives cannot. These locative suffixes consist of monosyllabic Locatives; the dissyllabic Locatives, which are formed of two monosyllabic Locatives, and are used freely as Locative expressions, mostly function in the same way as Locative suffixes.

Thus we may make a list of possible Locative suffixes as follows:

1) Monosyllabic Locatives or Locative suffixes: shang 'upper part'; xia 'lower part'; di 'bottom'; zuo 'left'; you 'right'; qian 'front'; hou 'back'; zhong 'middle'; nei and li 'inside'; jian 'side'; tou 'end'; pang and bian and ce 'side'; wai 'outside'; mian 'face or side'; dong 'east'; nan 'south'; xi 'west'; bei 'north'; and possibly a few others.

2) Dissyllabic Locatives: shang^xia 'upper and lower part'; zuoyou 'left and right'; liwai 'inside and outside'; pangbian 'side'; zuobian and zuomian 'left side'; dongbian and dongmian 'east side'; waibian and waimian 'outside'; cebian and cemian 'side'; zhengmian 'front side'; qianbian 'front'; waitou 'outside'; and quite a few of others.

Still, there is a group of expressions which merits our further attention. These expressions, besides being locative suffixes, can also be used to give exact information relating to time: these expressions are qian 'front or before'; hou 'back or after'; zhong 'middle or amid'; nei and li 'inside, or within'; wai 'outside, or beyond, or beside'. Examples are:

san nian qian (hou, zhong, nei, li, wai) 'three years before (after, in three years, beyond or beside three years)'.

Though these expressions can identify temporal nouns, they can also be used with verb phrases, like chifan qian (hou, zhong, wai) 'before (after, while, beside) eating meal'. Also, among the Locatives there are the following -- mostly dissyllabic ones -- litou, shangtou, limian, xiamian, xiatou, dixia, houmian, which, except for the Locative meaning, can also be used in the abstract sense 'where the matter of ... is concerned' for the first three Locatives, and in the sense 'after being ... or the doing of ...' for the last four Locatives. As such, these Locatives can be used with some verb and adjective phrases, especially those of two or more syllables. Here, however, a crucial difference could be established: A verb or an adjective, when required, usually colligates with dissyllabic Locatives only, while a noun can form a Locative by being used either with a monosyllabic or a dissyllabic Locative suffix. If this demarcation is not clear enough, we can rely on the interchangeability of zhong, nei, li, all meaning 'in' or 'inside', when used with

nouns. For example, in the following expressions:

san nian zhong (or nei, li) 'in three years'
zhuozi zhong (or nei, li) 'in the desk'

zhong, nei, li are shown to be used indiscriminately. When used with verbs, however, they may have different meanings. Thus,

chifan zhong 'while eating meal'
chifan li(mian) 'where the matter of eating meal is concerned'
*chifan nei

Also there are some monosyllabic verbs and adjectives which can be used with locative suffixes, especially in archaic, written, or idiom-like expressions. This time they can be distinguished from nouns because it is not possible to interchange zhong, li and nei. For example,

(1) Xiao-li cang dao 'smile-in hide knife -- a knife is hidden in one's smile'
(2) Cu-li you xi 'careless-in have careful -- Though usually careless, he is sometimes very careful'
(3) Ku-zhong zuo le 'bitter-in make fun -- One enjoys oneself while in dismal situation'
(4) Nao-zhong qu jing 'Noisy-in take quiet -- The place is quiet though in noisy circumstances'

where the first syllable or word in (1) would be considered a verb, that in (2) an adjective, that in (3) and (4) both as adjective and verb. Here we can confirm the foregoing classification by the feature that li and zhong here cannot be replaced by nei. On the other hand, since xiao 'smile', cu 'careless, or rough', ku 'bitter', nao 'noisy' are used with one of the Locative suffixes, and in the context, they apparently express something like that of an abstract noun, rather than that of an adjective or verb, we have a reason to accept them as nominal expressions. By the D-M compound, however, we can only accept xiao, ku, and nao as nouns, and cu 'careless' is rejected as such. Here is another example that D-M frame has failed to give a satisfactory solution. As an adjective, cu 'careless', for instance, is here used in the meaning of cuxin; the latter can be identified, by the two criteria mentioned above, that is, the D-M compound and the adverb hen 'very', both as a noun and an adjective. By this proposed criterion, however, we can accord

the same lexical form and meaning to cu and cuxin. Also, cu may be used with the meaning of cuzao 'rough or coarse'. Again, by the same two criteria, cuzao can be identified both as an adjective and a noun, while cu can be identified as adjective only. In other words, expressions of the same meaning are identified as having a different number of, or different parts of speech. The colligation of nouns with the D-M compound, it seems to me, is for the most part decided by the number of syllables, and in modern Chinese, nouns are preferred in two or more syllables. Thus, though Chinese understand zhuo 'table', yi 'chair', they tend to say zhuozi, yizi. As Chinese seldom say yi zhang zhuo, yi ba yi, those who stick to the D-M compound would very probably reject zhuo 'table', and yi 'chair' as nouns. This explains why ye, wan, both meaning 'night', can not be so readily used with the D-M compound, while yewan, a combination of ye and wan, is accepted as a noun.

As a test to this proposed new criterion, we can use the same nouns as above. In Chinese, there are not only zhuozi-shang 'on the desk', yizi-shang 'on the chair', but also zhuo-shang and yi-shang. For ye, wan, and yewan, we have ye-li, wan-shang, and yewan-li, all meaning 'in the evening or night'. One point which must be mentioned here is: zhuozi-shang 'desk plus locative suffix on or upper part', is used as a nominal expression, which would mean something like English 'on the desk' or 'the upper face of the desk'. Though both English expressions can be used as Locatives, one is in the form of a prepositional phrase, the other, a nominal head modified by a prepositional phrase. The Chinese counterparts as discussed here are composed of two nominal elements, or simply two nouns, like English 'lakeside', 'hilltop', 'waterfront', etc.

V

To sum up, I have in this short topic presented two propositions. One is: All nouns can serve as Locatives. This is exemplified in the Locative structures of Chinese nouns, mostly with the overt markers of Locative suffixes, just like English nouns used as such in the form of prepositional phrases, or like Japanese nouns used as such in the form of postpositional phrases. Moreover, the localistic theory seems to be in support of this proposition (Anderson: 1971). Secondly, I proposed that Chinese Locative suffixes, by way of their colligation with nouns, somewhat like a Russian noun with case inflections, should be accepted as another criterion for identifying Chinese nouns. I am inclined to believe that this inherent capability

of nouns to function as Locatives is a linguistic universal, besides a language particular for Chinese.

NOTE

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